

**CLAIMS:**

What is claimed is:

1. A method of displaying data to a user at a user station comprising:  
 providing a mass storage medium to said user station that contains said data;  
 5 establishing a communication channel between said user station and a server;  
 sending queries relating to metadata index categories established for said data, said queries sent from said user station over said communications channel to said server;  
 10 obtaining pointers from a metadata index located at said server that indicate the location of data on said mass storage medium that corresponds to said queries:  
 using said pointers to access data from said mass storage medium.
2. The method of claim 1 wherein said step of establishing a communications channel comprises:  
 establishing a dial-up connection between said user station and said server.
3. The method of claim 1 wherein said step of establishing a communications channel comprises:  
 establishing a DSL connection between said user station and said server.
4. The method of claim 1 wherein said step of obtaining pointers comprises:  
 using a search engine to apply boolean logic to said queries and obtain pointers from said metadata index.
5. A system for displaying data to a user at a user station comprising:  
 a communications channel;  
 a local mass storage device containing data to be displayed;

an input device for generating queries regarding the data that is to be displayed;

a computer coupled to said display, said input device, said local mass storage device and said communications channel that transmits said queries over said communications channel, receives pointers in response to said queries, accesses data on  
5 said local mass storage device corresponding to said pointers and displays said data on said display that has been accessed on said local mass storage device;

a server coupled to said communications channel that receives said queries, obtains pointers from a metadata index corresponding to said queries and  
10 transmits said pointers across said communications channel to said user station.

6. The system of claim 5 wherein said server further comprises:

a search engine that receives and processes said queries in accordance with metadata index categories, and retrieves said pointers from said metadata index.

7. The system of claim 5 further comprising:

an index generator that generates metadata index categories from said data.

8. The system of claim 7 wherein said server further comprises:

a search engine that receives and processes said queries in accordance with metadata index categories and retrieves said pointers from said metadata index.